

VZCZCXRO5704
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLH RUEHNP RUEHPW RUEHROV
RUEHSR
DE RUEHTA #2553/01 3640427
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 290427Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4216
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 0977
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCLS/SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0378
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1084
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY 0549
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY 0452
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2445

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 002553

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN
CENTCOM FOR TRANSCOM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2023

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN LIKELY TO APPROVE TRANSCOM'S NORTHERN
DISTRIBUTION NETWORK IN JANUARY

REF: A. ASTANA 2457

[1](#)B. ASTANA 2384

Classified By: Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland: 1.4 (A), (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Kazakhstan is close to making a positive decision to participate in TRANSCOM'S Northern Distribution Network. On December 26, Security Council Secretary Kairbek Suleymenov said he would instruct his staff immediately to draft a decision memo for President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Given the winter holidays, we probably cannot expect this decision until early in January. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador and DATT met with Security Council Secretary Kairbek Suleymenov and Deputy Secretary Nurlan Abdirov on December 26 for over an hour to press for a soonest possible decision to allow TRANSCOM's Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to pass through Kazakhstan. As Abdirov had requested previously, the Ambassador provided TRANSCOM's lists of the 50 most common building supplies and 50 most common provisions that TRANSCOM ships to troops, noting, as previously mentioned, TRANSCOM would be willing to consider purchasing some of these supplies in Kazakhstan, and could send an experts' team to Kazakhstan after the turn of the year for this purpose. He emphasized the urgency of Kazakhstan's "green light" by explaining that a significant number of additional U.S. troops will arrive in Afghanistan during the first quarter of 2009 and will have to be supplied and provisioned; preparation for this increase must begin immediately. He added that Kazakhstan is the last piece of the NDN puzzle, since Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Russia are already on board -- all we need is "yes," and the logistical flow can start.

[1](#)3. (C) Thanking the Ambassador for the lists, Suleymenov quipped that purchasing goods in Kazakhstan would not solve the current economic crisis but is politically important in Kazakhstan's decision-making process. In fact, Suleymenov appeared not especially well briefed on NDN, and at one point confused the NATO military transit agreement with NDN. He wanted to know what kind of formal, legal agreements the United States had entered into with other transit agreement partners. The Ambassador responded there are no formal agreements; in Azerbaijan, for example, the word of President Ilhom Aliyev had been sufficient. At times, Suleymenov

seemed inordinately interested in details, wanting to know how the roughly 10,000 residential containers waiting to be shipped to Afghanistan had arrived in Baku and what was their point of origin. He also worried whether Kazakhstan would have enough rail cars to handle the flow of goods. When he continued to evidence confusion exactly what the U.S. government means by a commercial arrangement, the Ambassador assured him that the only role of the U.S. government will be to pay commercial contractors for their goods and services -- "no boots on the ground." In answer to another question, the Ambassador emphasized that the commercial logistical companies TRANSCOM would indeed pay all tariffs, taxes, and follow all local laws.

¶4. (C) In the end, Suleymenov was positive, noting that every element of the government of Kazakhstan sees NDN as a political decision and not an opportunity to profit commercially. He said clearly Astana understands the political importance of NDN and implied Kazakhstan does not want to be "odd man out." He said he would instruct his staff to draft immediately a recommendation to President Nazarbayev. He said clearly the decision would not depend on pre-agreement to purchase goods in Kazakhstan, since "that could take 10 years and the war would then be long over."

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Given that half the government is on vacation for the winter holidays, we do not expect a final decision until sometime early in January; but when the decision comes, we expect it to be positive. While we have briefed Deputy Secretary Abdirov and many other senior officials repeatedly on the details of NDN since TRANSCOM CDR General McNabb's November 21 visit to Astana, and while we

ASTANA 00002553 002 OF 002

would think a purely commercial arrangement should be the simplest of all decisions, this entire long-drawn-out process illustrates how ponderous Kazakhstan's presidential decision-making can be. END COMMENT.
HOAGLA ND